

DUBB'S BRIDGE
(Hosensack Creek Bridge)
Spinnerstown Road (SR 2031) spanning
Hosensack Creek just East of
Limeport Pike (SR 2029)
Dillingerville vicinity
Lehigh County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-341

HAER
PA
39-DILL.V
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

DUBBS BRIDGE (Hosensack Creek Bridge)

HAER No. PA-341

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UTM: 18.460460.4479940
Quad: Milford Square, PA, 1:24,000

Date of Construction: circa 1830s

Engineer/Builder: Unknown

Present Owner: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Transportation and Safety Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Present Use: Vehicular bridge

Significance: The Dubbs Bridge is important in local history. It is a fine example of a small-scale, stone bridge erected in association with expanding highway improvements in rural Pennsylvania in the nineteenth century. It is also a part of the National Register-eligible Dubbs-Reith Historic District, which is significant for its excellent examples of nineteenth-century Pennsylvania German architecture, and for its contribution to the agricultural development of the area. The Dubbs family, for which the bridge is named, dominated the local scene from 1734 through the early twentieth century. The Dubbs Bridge is a significant element in both the district and the surrounding landscape.

Project Information: An evaluation advised replacement of the structure. Documentation of the structure was stipulated to mitigate the adverse effect of the replacement of the bridge that is part of a National Register-eligible Historic District.

Margaret M.M. Pickart, Principal Investigator
Archaeological and Historical Consultants, Inc.
101 N. Pennsylvania Avenue, PO Box 482
Centre Hall, PA 16828

DUBBS BRIDGE
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Summary Description of the Dubbs Bridge

The Dubbs Bridge carries Spinnerstown Road in an east-west direction over Hosensack Creek. The bridge is situated just east of the termination of Spinnerstown Road at Limeport Pike. East of the bridge, Spinnerstown Road curves to the southeast. Situated on the north side of the road is a house with a summer kitchen, a barn, and two sheds. A third shed is situated on the south side of the road. These buildings and the bridge comprise the National Register-eligible Dubbs-Reith Historic District. Land to the west of the bridge is steep and heavily wooded.

The Dubbs Bridge is a two-span, camelback arch bridge constructed of uncoursed rubble masonry with cut stone voussoirs.¹ It is approximately 100 feet long. Its clear roadway width is approximately 22 feet. The highest point of the bridge is approximately 14.5 feet above the creek bed. The elliptical arches of the bridge are approximately 8.5 feet high and 12.5 feet wide. The arches are separated by a central pier that is approximately 6.5 feet wide. The spandrel walls of the bridge rise above the roadway to form low parapets. The height of the parapet walls varies along the length of the bridge from approximately 2.75 feet to 3.5 feet above the surface of the road. The parapet walls are approximately 2 feet wide. The Dubbs Bridge carries no date plaque and no date stone is visible.

Repairs were made to the Dubbs Bridge in 1912. These repairs included the replacement of the wooden coping with a concrete coping, the plastering of all masonry surfaces (excluding the voussoirs), and the reinforcement of the northwest abutment with a concrete pier. The northeast abutment and the central pier were reinforced at a later date.² In 1932 the northern parapet was extended approximately 33 feet to the west; this part of the parapet was constructed entirely of concrete.³

¹ A camelback arch bridge is one in which the parapets incline toward the middle of the span.

² "Agreement: The County of Lehigh and ..."

³ "Dubbs Bridge 5/11/32."

Historical Background of the Dubbs Bridge

The existing Dubbs Bridge carries Spinnerstown Road (S.R. 2031) over Hosensack Creek in Lower Milford Township, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. Upper Milford Township was formed as part of Bucks County in 1738 and was incorporated into Lehigh County in 1812. In 1852 the township was divided into the Upper and Lower political units. Hosensack Creek, which drains most of Lower Milford Township, empties into the Perkiomen Creek, which in turn drains into the Schuylkill River at Valley Forge. The word "Hosensack" is German for "pants-pocket," a reference derived from German surveyors who noted that the upper part of the creek was surrounded on three sides by hills, leaving only one way in and out.

Hosensack Creek was a site of early settlement and industry in the township. Several settlers of German descent purchased tracts in the vicinity of the creek in the early eighteenth century. Among them was Jacob Dubbs (originally Dubs, 1710-1775), who received a warrant for a parcel along the creek in 1734. The tract, called "Potts," was patented to his son Daniel in 1772. Dubbs contributed significantly to the agricultural and industrial development of the area by establishing a forge, a pottery, a tannery, a gristmill, and a sawmill. These industries were continued and expanded by his descendants.

In 1815 Daniel's son, also named Jacob (1779-1852), received a part of the family farmstead following the execution of a written agreement. This agreement was made official in 1839.⁴ The younger Dubbs built a stone house, a frame and stone barn, and other associated structures on his property in the 1830s.⁵ These structures, all well-preserved examples of a Pennsylvania German Folk style, formed the core of the Dubbs family operations for over a century.

The Dubbs farmstead is situated just east of Hosensack Creek, near the intersection of Spinnerstown Road (SR 2031) and Limeport Pike (SR 2029). These roads were major thoroughfares in the township from the early nineteenth century; the first mail route in the township was established in 1812 on Spinnerstown Road.⁶ With the farmstead located so close to the creek, a strong and durable stream crossing would have been useful to ease the transport of animals, goods, and people to other parts of the farm and throughout the township. It is likely that a stone bridge would have been erected at this crossing around the time when Dubbs was constructing his home and farm buildings in the 1830s.

⁴ Lehigh County Deed Book 9, page 78.

⁵ According to Mrs. Franklin A. Reith, the date of 1837 was carved on an interior beam of the barn. It is assumed that the house and other outbuildings were also constructed at about this time.

⁶ Mathews and Hungerford, 369.

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A document in the files of the Lehigh County Historical Society identifies two stone arch bridges crossing Hosensack Creek in Lehigh County.⁷ One of these bridges is the Dubbs Bridge "between Chestnut Hill and Hosensack," a location that corresponds to the present-day Dubbs Bridge. Unfortunately, no construction date was entered for this bridge. The other structure, identified as the Hosensack Bridge, was erected in 1839. A third bridge, known as Shultz's Bridge, was constructed over a branch of the Hosensack Creek in 1833. All three of these structures were classified as twin span stone arch bridges. The proximity of the bridges and the similarity of type suggest that the Dubbs Bridge was also built in the 1830s.⁸

Although bridges constructed of stone remained less popular than bridges of iron and steel in America, numerous small-scale stone arch highway bridges were erected in rural areas throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in association with expanding road improvements. Stone bridges were popular for their durability, because they required little maintenance, and because they could be erected by local masons. The Dubbs Bridge is an excellent example of this type of bridge.

⁷ "County and Inter-County Bridges."

⁸ Roberts indicates that "A new bridge over the Hosensack Creek was built at a cost of \$896.81" on February 13, 1834. This reference may pertain to the Dubbs Bridge, but no specific location was given to confirm this possibility (Roberts 1943, 650).

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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- Laudenslager, Darlene (Bureau of Planning, City of Allentown). Interview with Douglas Dinsmore. Allentown, PA, 3 May, 1989.
- Moyer, Dennis K. (Librarian of the Schwenkfelder Library and Museum). Interview with Margaret Pickart. Pennsburg, PA, 2 September, 1994.
- Reith, Mr. and Mrs. Franklin A. (Current Owners of the Dubbs-Reith Farmstead). Interview with Douglas Dinsmore. Zionsville, PA, 7 April, 1989.

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- "Agreement: The County of Lehigh and George H. Slenker and Herbert J. Weiler, partners trading as Allentown Construction Company. Dubbs Bridge." Filed in the Office of the County Commissioners, Allentown, Pennsylvania, on December 13, 1912. Copy filed under "Dubbs Bridge" in the Library of the Lehigh County Historical Society.
- "County and Inter-County Bridges, January 1, 1933, Corrected to January 1, 1935," filed under "County of Lehigh-Bridges-Files" in the Library of the Lehigh County Historical Society, Allentown, PA.
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(Copy available at the library of the Lehigh County Historical
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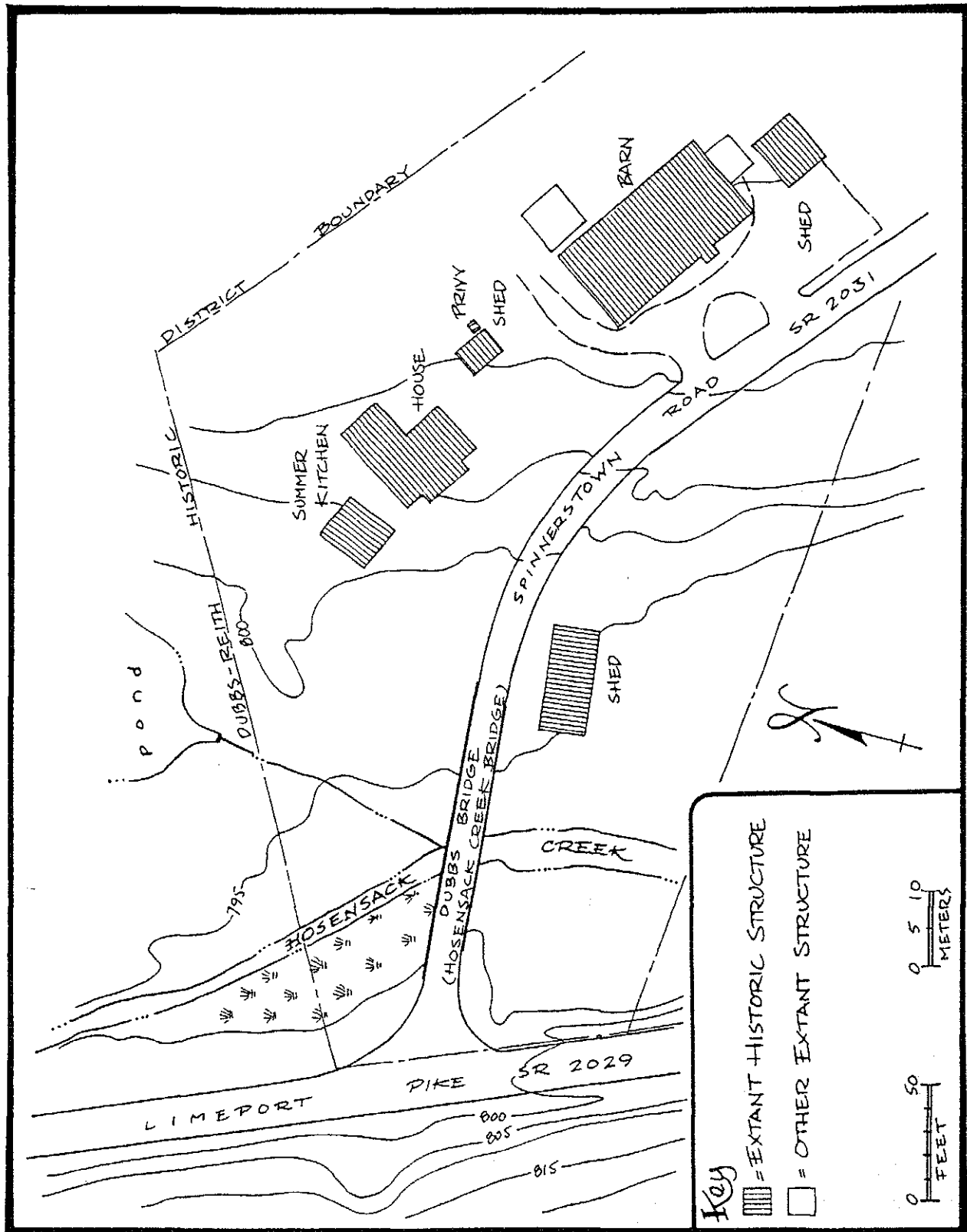
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Current Site Plan of the DUBBS BRIDGE (Hosensack Creek Bridge)